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ART. XII.—CRITICAL NOTICES.

- 1.—*Oration pronounced before the Citizens of Providence, on the 4th of July, 1826, being the Fiftieth Anniversary of American Independence.* By WILLIAM HUNTER. Providence. 8vo. pp. 46.

ORATIONS, addresses, eulogies, and the like, come upon us so thickly, that we find it impossible to do them any justice, within the compass prescribed to us, either by a formal criticism, or general notice. The number of pamphlets of this description, which have been laid on our table during the last quarter, if brought under review in detail, would afford matter more than enough to fill up the entire pages of our journal. This multiplicity renders a selection, which shall do equal justice to all, by no means easy, even if we had much more room to spare, than our accustomed limits will allow. We hope this will be a sufficient apology to publishers and authors, for not acknowledging their liberality in supplying us with works of this kind, in a more substantial manner, than merely inserting their titles in our list of new publications. From the nature of our work, which is meant to contain, not a review of books only, but discussions of interesting and important topics, we can rarely do more than this with the mass of new books. The American press is becoming so fruitful, that a short notice of every work would so much encumber our pages, as to leave little or no room for the execution of its main purpose, and we must be contented with making what we deem the less sacrifice. It is our aim, however, to bring before the public whatever is most valuable, and most worthy of observation, in the literary as well as the political progress of the country. But, as we cannot do everything, we are fully sensible that our judgment may not always guide us to do what is best, and herein we claim as much indulgence, as the good nature of our readers shall incline them to think we deserve, and no more.

We call attention to Mr Hunter's oration, chiefly to bring out a few historical facts, which the author has interwoven with his discourse, relating to the State of Rhode Island. Beginning with the first planting of the colony, he observes,

‘Roger Williams, the founder of Providence Plantations, the learned and popular divine of Salem, insisted for freedom of conscience in worship, even “to Papists and Arminians;” with security of civil peace. He was banished in 1634–5, as a dis-

turber of the peace of the church and commonwealth. You know the rest— I dare not dilate upon it. The water of that spring near which he took refuge, overlooked from the neighboring hills by armed, but to him harmless savages, ought to be on this day the exhilarating beverage of his descendants—more exhilarating and heartcheering “than costliest wines of Chios or of Crete.” Mrs Hutcheson, who, as Cotton says, “was once beloved, and all the faithful embraced her conference, and blessed God for her fruitful discourses,” with Coddington, and all her train of Antinomians, were disfranchised and banished, and in their place of refuge, the great island of Adquidneck, Rhode Island, passed in solemn resolve, the earliest and the most strenuous declaration of the principles of perfect freedom in religious concerns, the world had ever known. The third and last, but not less interesting foundation by these primary associations that formed this state, all proceeding from the same persecution, and the same manifold opposition, was the settlement of the Gortonists, on lands purchased of Shaw Omet, the Sachem of the Narragansetts. These are the men of Kent, the settlers of the town of Warwick.

‘If ever there was a complete and victorious vindication against the sarcasm, that our ancestors were so barbarous, as not to be capable of good sense and good English, it is furnished by the paper issued by the owners and inhabitants of Shaw Omet, dated 28th October, 1643. This paper was addressed to certain men styled Commissioners, sent from the Massachusetts, supported by an armed force, whose names, they say in contemptuous defiance, —“we know not.” That paper is heroic, and Homeric; Demosthenian, but superior to Demosthenes. “If you come,” say they, “to treat with us in the ways of equity and peace, together therewith, shaking a rod over our heads, in a band of soldiers; be assured that we have passed our childhood in that point, and are under the commission of the great God, not to be children in understanding, neither in courage, but to acquit ourselves like men. We strictly charge you hereby, that you set not a foot upon our lands, in any hostile way, but upon your perils; and that, if any blood be shed, upon your heads shall it be. And know, that if you set an army of men upon any part of our land, contrary to our just prohibition therein, we are under command, and have our commission sealed, all ready to resist you unto death. For this is the law of our God, by whom we stand, which is written in all men’s hearts, that, if ye spread a table before us as friends, we sit not as men invective, envious, or malcontent, not touching a morsel, nor looking from you, who point us unto our dish, but we eat with you, by virtue of the unfeigned law of relations, not only to satisfy our stomachs, but to increase friend-

ship and love, the end of feastings. So also, if you visit us as combatants, or warriors, by the same law of relations we will resist you unto death." But their courage could not save them from overwhelming force, preceded, however, by the basest treachery. Gorton, and his associates, Green, Holden, and others, were imprisoned; and Gorton was condemned as a blasphemous enemy of the true religion and its ordinances, adjudged to be confined and set to work, and to bear such bolts as may hinder his escape during the pleasure of the Court; but should he break his confinement, then to suffer death.' pp. 21—24.

Again;

'The charter ultimately procured by the talents, address, and good fortune of Clark, under the form of a corporation, has all the essentials of a well tempered democracy. The king, after he granted it, virtually excluded himself from any interference with it. He had no viceroy, he had no *veto* on the laws of the colony. We endured not his actual or constructive presence. We felt his power hardly at all, his influence rarely, but always benignantly and beneficially. In the first session of the Assembly under that charter, and indeed before it had passed through all the ceremonies of a royal grant, we anticipated and settled that topic of controversy, which a century afterwards convulsed the world. In March, 1663, in an act for declaring the privileges of his majesty's subjects, it was enacted "that no tax shall be imposed or required of the colonies, but by the act of the General Assembly." When Andros, under the commission of James II, called for the surrender of our charter, we did not surrender it. Though we bent before the storm, we did not break down under it. We preserved the charter as the talisman of our being, the palladium of our rights, the idol of our affections. Awaiting the revolution of 1688, we temporized, and though the charter had been, so far as irregular power could do it, annulled, after that glorious event, viz. the revolution of 1688, we went on acting under it, without clamor or apology, as unharmed and unforfeited. When the mother country was in the right, or we thought it so, nothing could surpass the energy and enthusiasm of our patriotism. Under the fascinating influence of the administration of the elder Pitt, we sent five hundred men into the Canadian expedition.' pp. 28, 29.

The following events show the determined and noble spirit of the people of Rhode Island, in resisting the first symptoms of British aggression, which hastened the revolution. It will doubtless be thought, that Mr Hunter a little overrates the importance of these events; but the lofty feeling of patriotism and self respect which prompted them, can never be estimated too highly.

‘Before the enactment, or during the negligent enforcement of the English Laws of Trade, we grew up with prodigious thriftiness. The new system adopted after the peace of 1763, not only checked our commerce, but indicated a systematic design of oppression. Of this design, we had an intuitive conception, and to it an invincible repugnance. It has lately, not two months ago, been stated by a British minister in the House of Commons, “that however the attempt at taxation might be viewed as the immediate cause of the American explosion, yet the train had been long laid, in the severe and unbending efforts of England to extend more rigorously than ever the Laws of Trade.” “Every little case,” he says, “that was brought before the Board of Trade, was treated with the utmost severity.”* The two really great cases that occurred, originated here. The first was the attack at Newport, on the 17th of June, 1769, of the armed revenue sloop, *Liberty*, whose captain had been guilty of some oppressions and enormities. She was attacked by a band of unknown people, who cut her cables, let her drive on shore on the point, where they cut away her masts, scuttled her, carried both her boats to the recently planted liberty tree, at the upper end of the town, and burnt them. The second was the affair of the *Gaspee*, on the 9th of June, 1772. The first blood that was shed in the revolutionary contest, by that very act begun, stained her deck, and it was drawn by a Rhode Island hand. Yes, the blood of Lieutenant Duddington was the first blood drawn in the American cause. The scene of the transaction is within our view, and you have now in this assembly four of the lads, now veterans, who were zealous and foremost partizans, on that brave occasion. How powerfully permanent is the effect of early principle and habit, how indestructible the cast of original character! How true it is, that “as the twig is bent, the tree inclines.” From all I know of these gentlemen, and I have known a good deal—from all their merits and their peculiarities, I should have said, that these were the men, that were engaged in that enterprise. They are they, who on the proposition of their patriotic leader, John Brown, exclaimed, “We are the boys that can do it.”’ pp. 30—32.

The same spirit was kept alive, till the revolutionary contest became general, as will be seen by the following statement.

‘In 1774 you did an act, if possible, more positive, daring, and decisive, more unequivocally indicative of your warlike spirit, and your determination to be independent. You rose, as the British lawyers said, from common felony to high and atrocious treason.

* ‘Huskisson’s Speech, 12th of May last.’

As soon as the proclamation, prohibiting the importation of arms from England, was known here, you dismantled the king's fort at Newport, and took possession of forty pieces of cannon. All our leading men, not only had at heart, but avowed the same sentiment as that contained in General Greene's letter to Governor Ward, then a member of the first Congress, dated on the 4th of June, 1775, at the camp on Prospect Hill. "Permit me," says he then, "to recommend from the sincerity of my heart, ready at all times to bleed in my country's cause, a declaration of independence, and call upon the world and the great God who governs it, to witness the propriety and rectitude thereof." We anticipated Congress in the declaration of Independence; for, by a solemn act of our General Assembly, we dissolved all connexion with Great Britain, in the May previous. We withdrew our allegiance from the king, and renounced his government forever, and, in a declaration of Independence, we put down in a condensed, logical statement, our unanswerable reasons for so doing.' pp. 35, 36.

There are two or three of General Greene's letters in existence, in which he urged the declaration of Independence more than a year before that measure was resorted to by the Congress. To Rhode Island, it would seem, is due the credit of the first formal declaration by any colony; although South Carolina had two months before formed a new constitution, and instituted an independent government, which, after all, was perhaps as strong a declaration of independence as could be made. Virginia did the same in May, about the time of the Rhode Island declaration. But, in recurring to this subject, we must not forget the Mecklenburgh declaration of independence in North Carolina, made in a solemn manner on the nineteenth of May, 1775, a year before that of Rhode Island. This event is as well authenticated, as any in the revolutionary history. We have examined the subject in another place. See *Vol. XII. p. 35, for January 1821.*

We take the liberty of correcting a slight error, into which the author has fallen, in a matter of some importance. Speaking of the religious freedom early enjoyed in Rhode Island, as established by Roger Williams, he says, 'Your ancestors announced this opinion, and enjoyed its legal exercise, long before the able and amiable Roman Catholic, Lord Baltimore, adopted and enforced it.' But it happens, that Lord Baltimore settled his colony in Maryland, in 1634, the very year in which Roger Williams was banished from Salem. Religious freedom was a first principle with Lord Baltimore from the beginning of his settlement. It cannot be said, therefore, that Rhode Island enjoyed this privilege *long before* Maryland. We have expressed

our opinion on a former occasion [*Vol. XX. p. 102.*], and we still believe it true, that the *first legislative act* in favor of unlimited toleration, which is recorded of any government, was passed by the Roman Catholic colony of Maryland.

We have not taken up Mr Hunter's Oration for the purpose of criticism, yet one or two remarks are demanded from us on this subject. With a good deal of vigor of thought, a rapid style of composition, and a high tone of patriotic feeling, there are some faults of language and rhetoric, which ought not to be passed over. You will find, for instance, such words as *rationalize*, *stabilitated*, *inobstructible*, *insurgency*, *violative*. Some of the author's metaphors are strained in no ordinary degree. He tells us, that the Rhode Islander, in the enjoyment of his religious liberty, 'may drink the waters of life, in rude simplicity, from the palm of his hand, from the crystal cup of reformed episcopacy, or from the embossed and enchased golden chalice of papal gorgeousness.' Again, Rhode Island 'is like the fabled sea nymph, described in the Grecian Anthology, and depicted on antique gems and cameos, of exquisite exility of form, but whose long, slender, and streamy arms embrace, in their graceful fold, a hundred other islands and shores.' Once more, a certain operation of the mind 'sublimates imagination to evanescence.' Few other passages are so extravagant as these, yet there are many examples of loose expressions, and an indefinite use of language, which should not have escaped an accurate writer.

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- 2.—*The Ohio Gazetteer, or Topographical Dictionary, containing a Description of the several Counties, Towns, Villages, Settlements, Roads, Rivers, Lakes, Springs, Mines, &c. in the State of Ohio; alphabetically arranged.* By JOHN KILBOURN. Eighth edition, carefully revised and corrected. Columbus, Ohio. 12mo. pp. 231.

THE progress of the states of the West, in population, wealth, and improvement, is so rapid, as not only to defy political calculation, and set at nought all former precedent, but also to outstrip the geographer in his greatest speed. The tide is so strong and incessant, that the change is perpetual, and what is true to day will be doubtful tomorrow, and entirely false in a week to come. To no state does this remark apply more strikingly, than to Ohio, the astonishing growth of which, within the last thirty years, would have seemed a miracle at any former age of the world. Within the memory of thousands now living, Ohio was a wilderness, the abode only of savages and wild beasts; it now contains